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26 November 1984ROSENTHAL RECEIVES LIFE SENTENCE
ATLANTA

Former Atlanta bail bondsman Harold Rosenthal received the maximum sentence Monday -- life in prison with no chance for parole -- for directing the largest cocaine trafficking ring in the nation's history.

The convicted cocaine conspirator also was fined \$425,000.

Rosenthal was convicted in October following a lengthy trial in U.S. District Court on charges he headed a smuggling operation that brought more than 5 tons of cocaine worth an estimated \$3.8 billion into the United States between September 1981 and last January.

Defense attorneys had claimed Rosenthal was doing the smuggling with a special dispensation from the federal government because he was spying on Marxist groups in Colombia for the CIA.

Prosecutors said Rosenthal and his co-conspirators were motivated by greed.

Rosenthal was among 53 people indicted nationwide last January in the culmination of "Operation Southern Comfort," an 18-month investigation by the Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force that cracked the drug ring.

He was arrested by U.S. agents and Colombian officers in Bogota, Colombia, last year while stuck in a traffic jam. Rosenthal had escaped in 1981 from a federal facility in Memphis, Tenn., where he was serving 31 years on a drug smuggling conviction.

Defense attorneys said Rosenthal was recruited by a mystery figure, Loy Shipp. Shipp persuaded Rosenthal to spy on left wing groups in Colombia for the CIA, the defense said.

But prosecutors said Rosenthal fabricated the story about spying and that Shipp was a former major demoted to sergeant during the last five years of his Air Force career, which he spent as an air traffic controller at Dobbins Air Force Base in Marietta.